[with grateful thanks to Perplexity]

Summary

The article, "There Is No Person Without Potential: The Relevance of Ancient Wisdom," explains the contemporary significance of a traditional Sanskrit subhāṣita:

*** अमन्त्रमक्षरं नास्ति नास्ति मूलमनौषधम्।*

*अयोग्यः पुरुषो नास्ति योजकस्तत्र दुर्लभः॥***

Transliteration:
Amantram akṣaraṃ nāsti, nāsti mūlam anauṣadham;
ayogyaḥ puruṣo nāsti, yojakas tatra durlabhaḥ.
Meaning:
There is no syllable without potential significance, and no root without possible medicinal value. Similarly, there is no person without some capability; what is rare is the person who can recognize that capability and put it to appropriate use.

The article's central message is:

No person is without potential; the real scarcity is of people who can recognize, nurture, align and direct that potential meaningfully.

Main Ideas

1. Potential is present in everyone

The article does not claim that everybody can do everything or that all people have identical abilities. People differ in aptitude, temperament, interests, experiences, opportunities and limitations.

Its more realistic argument is that failure in one area does not prove total incapability. A person who is unsuitable for one role may be highly capable in another.

For example:

- **A student who is weak in memorisation may be excellent at observation.**
- **A quiet person may possess deep powers of reflection.**
- **A restless child may have creative energy requiring proper direction.**
- **An employee who struggles with routine work may excel in innovation.**
- **A person who is not a public speaker may be an excellent analyst.**

Therefore, instead of asking, "Is this person capable?", we should ask:

- **"Capable of what?"**
- **"Under what circumstances?"**
- **"With what guidance and opportunity?"**
- **"How can this capability be developed?"**

2. The importance of the "Yojaka"

The key word in the verse is Yojakaḥ. It comes from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, meaning to join, connect, combine or bring into an appropriate relationship.

A yojaka is one who can:

1. **Recognise potential.**
2. **Understand its nature.**
3. **Identify where it may be useful.**
4. **Connect it with a suitable purpose.**
5. **Create conditions for that potential to develop.**

A teacher, parent, mentor, coach, leader, manager or facilitator can become a yojaka. Such a person sees possibilities where others see only limitations.

3. The wisdom of not dismissing anything too quickly

The first two lines of the subhāṣita use the examples of syllables and roots. A syllable may appear insignificant in isolation but become meaningful when properly arranged. A root that appears ordinary may possess medicinal value, even if its usefulness is not immediately known.

The broader lesson is:

Our failure to recognise potential does not prove that potential is absent.

This principle applies to people, ideas, subjects of study, institutions and social groups.

4. Implications for parents

Parents may unintentionally try to make children fit a predetermined model of success. Comparison with siblings, classmates, relatives or socially admired professions can cause children to believe that their worth depends on achievement in one particular area.

The article recommends a more sensitive approach. Instead of asking:

"What should my child become?"

parents should ask:

“Who is my child becoming?”

They should observe:

- **What the child naturally notices.**
- **What questions the child asks.**
- **Which activities create genuine interest.**
- **Where persistence appears.**
- **Where empathy, curiosity, creativity or responsibility emerges.**
- **Which responsibilities bring out maturity.**

The goal is not to manufacture a personality but to discover, nurture and appropriately direct the personality that is developing.

5. Implications for students

A student who struggles in one subject may conclude, “I am not good at anything.” The article challenges this generalisation.

A better question is:

“What am I good at—or what could I become good at—with appropriate effort, guidance and opportunity?”

This is not false confidence. It is realistic self-discovery. The aim is not to believe, “I can do everything,” but:

“I can discover what I can do, develop it seriously and use it meaningfully.”

6. Education should develop connections

Education is not merely the accumulation of immediately usable information. Different subjects cultivate different capacities:

- **History develops perspective.**
- **Mathematics develops reasoning.**
- **Literature develops imagination.**
- **Science develops curiosity.**
- **Art develops observation.**
- **Music develops sensitivity to patterns.**
- **Philosophy develops questioning.**
- **Language develops precision.**
- **Social studies develop understanding of society and institutions.**

The deeper purpose of education is to help learners make meaningful connections among ideas, experiences and applications.

7. Implications for management and leadership

A manager should not merely rank employees as “best” and “weak.” The more important question is:

“What is each person particularly suited to do?”

The article presents this useful formula:

Right person + right responsibility + right environment + right support = potential becomes performance.

A weak leader sees only present performance. A better leader sees current capability. A great leader sees future potential and asks:

- **What can this person become?**
- **What responsibility may bring out the best in them?**
- **What support do they need?**
- **What challenge could stimulate their growth?**
- **How can their strength serve a larger purpose?**

8. Connection is the basis of innovation

Innovation often occurs when someone connects things that previously appeared unrelated:

- **A problem with a technology.**
- **A scientific discovery with an application.**
- **A need with an available resource.**
- **An idea with a method of implementation.**
- **Two disciplines to create a new possibility.**

Thus, innovation is not always creating something from nothing. It often means recognising a relationship that others have not yet noticed.

9. Relevance in the age of artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence can make information increasingly accessible. However, information alone is not wisdom.

In the AI era, human beings must increasingly learn to:

- **Identify relevance.**
- **Evaluate quality.**
- **Recognise relationships.**
- **Ask meaningful questions.**
- **Connect information with context.**
- **Decide what should be done with knowledge.**
- **Consider purpose, consequences and human welfare.**

AI may help identify possibilities, but people must decide which possibilities matter and how they should be used responsibly.

10. Human dignity and social responsibility

Calling a person "useless" or "incapable" is an extreme judgement because we cannot know the complete limits of another human being.

A more humble statement would be:

"I have not yet discovered where this person's capability lies."

This change replaces:

- **Dismissal with curiosity.**
- **Judgement with exploration.**
- **Labelling with development.**

A healthy society does not ask only, "Who is most talented?" It also asks:

"How can we help more people discover and develop their genuine abilities?"

The Four-Stage Framework

The article summarises the entire philosophy in four stages:

Stage	Guiding question
Potential	What ability, interest or possibility is present?
Alignment	Where can it be meaningfully used?
Development	What learning, practice and support are required?
Contribution	How can it serve a worthwhile purpose?

This framework is applicable to personal development, education, parenting, career guidance, leadership and social development.

Practical Action Points

A. For personal development

1. **Identify one overlooked ability List three abilities that you may possess but have not developed sufficiently. They may include listening, organising, explaining, patience, observation, creativity, relationship-building or problem-solving.**
2. **Separate one failure from your total identity Replace statements such as "I am a failure" with a more accurate statement: "I did not**

succeed in this particular situation; I must discover what I can do well and what I need to improve."

3. **Maintain a potential journal At the end of each day, record:**
    - **What did I do well?**
    - **What activity gave me energy?**
    - **What problem did I solve?**
    - **What positive quality did I demonstrate?**
    - **What ability should I practise tomorrow?**
4. **Choose one ability for deliberate development Select one ability and practise it consistently for 30 days. Define a small daily activity, such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, teaching, organising or learning a digital skill.**
5. **Connect ability with purpose Ask: "How can I use this ability for the benefit of my family, students, institution or community?"**

B. For parents

1. **Stop premature labelling Avoid repeatedly calling a child lazy, weak, careless, difficult or unintelligent. Such labels can become part of the child's self-image.**
2. **Observe before directing For one week, note what the child naturally:**
    - **Notices.**
    - **Enjoys.**
    - **Questions.**
    - **Repeats voluntarily.**
    - **Persists with.**
    - **Explains to others.**
    - **Does responsibly.**
3. **Ask better questions Instead of asking only, "What marks did you get?", ask:**
    - **"What did you find interesting today?"**
    - **"What problem did you solve?"**
    - **"What did you learn about yourself?"**
    - **"Where did you help someone?"**
    - **"What would you like to try?"**
4. **Provide varied opportunities Give children exposure to reading, art, music, sports, practical work, storytelling, technology, nature, service and group activities. Potential is often discovered through experience.**

5. **Praise process and values Recognise effort, patience, honesty, improvement, cooperation and responsibility—not only marks or prizes.**

C. For teachers and mentors

1. **Use a capability profile For each learner, record evidence under different headings:**
    - **Academic reasoning.**
    - **Communication.**
    - **Creativity.**
    - **Practical ability.**
    - **Leadership.**
    - **Cooperation.**
    - **Empathy.**
    - **Persistence.**
    - **Organisation.**
    - **Curiosity.**
2. **Offer multiple ways to demonstrate learning Allow students, where appropriate, to demonstrate understanding through writing, speaking, drawing, projects, demonstrations, role-play, group work or practical application.**
3. **Give a second opportunity A poor first performance should lead to feedback and another chance where feasible. Potential often becomes visible only after confidence develops.**
4. **Match responsibility with strength Give different students different roles: presenter, researcher, organiser, designer, questioner, timekeeper, mediator or summariser.**
5. **Use the language of possibility Replace "You cannot do this" with:**

"You are not able to do this yet. Let us identify what support and practice you need."

6. **Create a "hidden strengths" activity Ask students to identify one strength in a classmate that is not immediately visible. This can cultivate mutual respect and reduce social labelling.**

D. For leaders and managers

1. **Map people to responsibilities Review whether each person's role matches their interests, strengths and working style.**
2. **Distinguish lack of skill from lack of potential A person may require training, feedback, time or confidence rather than rejection.**

3. **Provide varied assignments Give employees opportunities to work in analysis, communication, innovation, coordination, mentoring and problem-solving.**
4. **Create supportive conditions Potential is more likely to become performance when people receive:**
    - **Clear expectations.**
    - **Suitable responsibility.**
    - **Resources.**
    - **Feedback.**
    - **Encouragement.**
    - **Reasonable time.**
    - **Psychological safety.**
5. **Ask developmental questions During reviews, ask:**
    - **“Which task brings out your best work?”**
    - **“What kind of responsibility would you like to try?”**
    - **“What prevents you from performing at your best?”**
    - **“What support would help you grow?”**

E. For AI-assisted learning and teaching

Whenever AI provides information, apply the following six-question check:

1. **Is this information relevant?**
2. **Is it reliable?**
3. **What is its context?**
4. **What other ideas does it connect with?**
5. **What are its possible consequences?**
6. **How can it be used ethically and constructively?**

The human responsibility is not merely to obtain answers but to connect knowledge with wisdom, values and purpose.

A Simple Action Plan

Use this worksheet for yourself, a student, a child or a colleague:

Question	Response
What potential do I observe?	
What evidence suggests this potential?	
Where might it be useful?	
What skill must be developed?	
What opportunity can be provided?	
Who can offer guidance?	

Question	Response
What is one action for this week?	
How will progress be reviewed?	
How might this ability contribute to others?	

A 30-Day Implementation Plan

- **Days 1–5: Observe. Identify interests, strengths, recurring behaviours and areas of energy.**
- **Days 6–10: Discuss. Have a non-judgmental conversation about abilities and aspirations.**
- **Days 11–15: Align. Select a suitable responsibility, project or learning opportunity.**
- **Days 16–25: Practise. Provide regular effort, feedback, encouragement and correction.**
- **Days 26–30: Review. Examine progress, difficulties, new strengths and the next developmental step.**

Concluding Message

The article's deepest lesson is that potential alone is not sufficient. It must be:

Recognised, aligned, developed and directed toward meaningful contribution.

The responsibility belongs both to the individual and to those around them. We must discover our own abilities, while also learning to recognise and nurture the abilities of children, students, colleagues and fellow citizens.

A useful personal resolution would be:

"I will not hastily dismiss myself or another person. I will look for potential, identify the right opportunity, support its development and connect it with a meaningful purpose."

This is the practical wisdom of the Yojaka—the person who sees what others overlook and helps potential become contribution.

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